

relief program for fishermen. Huge progress. Hugely important. Just the way the farmers were getting this kind of relief with regard to trade and markets that have been destroyed by the pandemic, the Secretary of Agriculture undertook a new program for the farmers of the sea, for the fishermen who are being negatively impacted the same way that our farmers on the land were.

This is an issue that I raised with the Secretary on the importance of moving forward, continuing that, and to be honest, there didn't seem to be a lot of interest. I was kind of shocked, but there didn't seem to be a lot of interest, and I was concerned. I am concerned.

Similarly, this progress we made with regard to the Tongass, access to the largest national forest in the country that is under USDA management—something Alaskans have been working on in a bipartisan way for 25 years. There didn't seem to be a lot of interest from the Secretary on that either.

So these are two issues hugely important to my State, hugely important to my constituents, hugely important to try to get Alaska out of a really deep recession where a lot of families are worried. And I got the sense that the Secretary just wasn't that interested. I really hope I am wrong. I really hope I am wrong.

So I plan on trying to work with him. You know, he had a strong, very strong bipartisan vote, but every now and then, if you really think the people you represent are not going to be given a lot of attention when they need it, it becomes a harder vote. It becomes a harder vote. He obviously has got strong bipartisan support, but I sure hope that when he becomes Secretary of Agriculture, he cares as much about the farmers of the sea, where we have made progress on, as he does about farmers on the land. I didn't see that in my meeting with him and I hope I am wrong and that is why I voted the way I did.

I also voted the way I did as it relates to this issue of access to the Tongass. Again, it is a huge issue to my State, a very bipartisan issue for my State. And, again, I hope that the Secretary and his team look at it as something that can help the economy of Alaska while protecting our environment, which, of course, we care about.

But these are the reasons that I voted the way I did, and I hope that my concerns are going to be proved to be unfounded. I am going to continue to advocate for my constituents in the way that I think is going to be very important as we try and get through these challenging times, particularly the Alaska Tongass.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

NOMINATION OF XAVIER BECERRA

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, today, the HELP Committee considered the nomination of Xavier Becerra,

our former House colleague, to head the Department of Health and Human Services, and tomorrow the Finance Committee will take their turn at examining his record.

It is hard to think of a nominee more notorious for actively seeking out ways to undermine religious freedom and our religious liberty. His contempt for those whose beliefs differ from his own is well documented, and, in many cases, his positions on those issues are far more radical than those held by the majority in his own party.

He supports abortion up to the moment of birth, and, in 2003, actively opposed the partial-birth abortion ban. He cosponsored legislation that would have forced religious employers to provide insurance that covers the morning-after pill, in spite of their mainstream and sincerely held religious beliefs. Bear in mind I said the legislation would have forced—not an option—forced religious employers to provide insurance that covered the morning-after pill.

In fact, Mr. Becerra has been so antagonistic toward fundamental constitutional principles that you could almost forget he doesn't have the public health experience most Americans would expect the Secretary of Health and Human Services to possess. In fact, he has no meaningful experience in healthcare at all—zero, none, not in public health or large-scale logistical operations or in any other area that might be helpful as we navigate our way out of a global pandemic. That is right. He has no healthcare experience.

This lack of experience, combined with his desire to destroy those who disagree with him, places him among the most unqualified and dangerous nominees ever to come before the Senate for consideration, and I urge my colleagues to join me in opposing his confirmation.

BIDEN ADMINISTRATION

Mr. President, I wish that we could write off this nomination as an anomaly, but we can't. It is part of a pattern of behavior on the left that has destabilized our already fragile political discourse and convinced the American people that the Biden administration will prioritize their radical liberal agenda above the rights of the people they were elected to serve.

I have to tell you, I hear about this every single day as I am talking with Tennesseans. Since the earliest days of the Republic, our Union has managed to survive because of the people's willingness to return to our founding principles—those first principles upon which we stand.

However much that they disagreed, they knew that they were stronger united than they were divided. So they would come together in the public square. They would have robust, respectful debate. They would agree to disagree, but they respected the fact that they lived in a free country, and they could do this without fear of persecution, without fear of being ostracized, and without fear of losing a job.

Today, Americans are looking for that same commitment to unity. Oh, they heard about it during the inaugural address. Unity—we are going to work for unity. But what has happened is a cord of panic and fear has been struck in their hearts as they see Executive order after Executive order and as they see Executive orders that are preferencing other countries and not the U.S.A. And as they hear from the left words that are, We are not looking for unity; what we are looking for is you to submit to our agenda, conform to our way of doing things. What they are doing is leaving no room for discussion, even on issues of international importance.

For decades, the various schools of thought represented in this Chamber have advocated for different approaches to foreign relations. Some revere international bodies and sweeping multilateral agreements, and others approach these constructs with caution, prioritizing national sovereignty over surface-level diplomacy.

When former President Trump formally withdrew from the Paris climate accords in 2019, economists, business owners, and budget watchdogs all breathed a sigh of relief because they knew that adherence to the Paris climate accords would put the United States at a competitive disadvantage. This wasn't a partisan debate, mind you; this was U.S.-based companies—U.S.-based companies that were saying thank you for withdrawing because adhering to this, when other countries that are our competitors will not adhere, puts us at a disadvantage.

Now, with the climate accords, by 2035, we would have seen hundreds of thousands of people lose their jobs, household electric bills go up as much as 20 percent, and an aggregate GDP free fall of \$2½ trillion. That is the cost. That is the cost of my way or the highway. That is the cost of putting other countries and their agenda ahead of us, the cost of their noncompliance.

Fast-forward to a little over a year later, and the Biden administration has thrown us back into the accords and back into that predicted economic free fall.

This week, I worked with my colleague Senator DAINES to introduce two pieces of legislation that will hopefully do a little bit of damage control on that issue.

The first is a bill that would prohibit taxpayer dollars from being used to rejoin the Paris Agreement. It makes sense. The reason it does is you are taking jobs away from U.S. employers. You are causing employees to become former employees or the unemployed. So it makes sense. If you want to do this, don't use taxpayer dollars. Don't make people pay for things that are going to take away their jobs.

The second is a resolution that would call on President Biden to submit the Paris Agreement to the Senate for approval. It makes sense. Where are treaties to come? Here. If you want unity,